

## **SUBMISSION TO PNCC 2017-18 DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN**

Environment Network Manawatū (ENM) congratulates the Palmerston North City Council on completing the Annual Budget. We are delighted to see the range of different activities that are planned for 2017-18.

Worthy of particular celebration is the securing of the national Wildbase facility, which should prove an asset and an attractant to the City over the long term.

### **Water**

#### Wastewater treatment and the Manawatū River

ENM welcomes the council's commitment to reduce the wastewater impact on the river. We also welcome the commitment to 'wide community consultation'. We encourage council to not just look at improvements at the treatment plant itself but take a more holistic approach which could include for example the reduction of wastewater going through the plant (e.g. utilisation of grey water at source). We also see a need to address the impacts of storm water.

We would like to see a robust and transparent engagement process with community from the very beginning that starts with the generation and exploration of creative and innovative ideas and narrows solutions down through thorough analysis.

#### Water monitoring savings of \$ 20,000

ENM would like to see the potential savings in monitoring reallocated to Citizen Science allowing communities engaged with water improvement initiatives to measure how their efforts contribute to river quality.

#### Proposed savings of \$43,000 in the water catchment for pest management and monitoring

While ENM welcomes the Council's endeavours to effect reductions in expenditure, we feel that any money saved on predator control in the Turitea catchment should be reallocated to predator control in adjoining areas. This would support New Zealand's goal to become Predator Free by 2050. It would also allow the city to increase habitat for native birds and other wildlife and thus enable local residents and visitors to experience iconic species not only at the Wildbase Recovery Centre but also in open spaces. ENM is already supporting this initiative through predator control.

### **Community Development**

ENM appreciates the city's ongoing commitment to community development. By supporting ENM as an umbrella organisation to enhance communication, coordination and cooperation across by now almost 50 member groups, the city has helped to create an entity that according to our research is unique in New Zealand. We see an opportunity for the city to further build on the momentum by stepping up its commitment in this regard.

Through its regular updates and event calendars, ENM connects increasing numbers of volunteers with opportunities to engage in place-making, healthier lifestyles and the

regeneration of native fauna and flora from the source of the Manawatū to the sea. The ability to enjoy a wide range of walkways and cycleways connecting many special places within the city boundaries and beyond gives locals a sense of pride and attracts visitors to return and spend more time in the city and its surrounds. There was strong uptake by visitors from outside the region for the recent highly successful Walking Festival.

At the same time the city enjoys tangible benefits whenever community groups adopt areas to eradicate pests and restore plantings. The same applies for community groups developing community gardens and other food initiatives.

ENM has increased its community engagement year by year on a static budget. While we appreciate that funding for the current year might be locked in, ENM would like to engage with council in a conversation of how to progress areas of mutual interest in the next 10-year plan. We are keen to further develop capacity around:

- Biodiversity and water quality
- Food action and community resilience
- The creation of an Envirocentre as a place to showcase good environmental practices in everyday life

## **Lighting**

(1086-City-wide - Street Lighting Upgrade to Current LEDs)

ENM supports this upgrade as an initiative that will contribute to safety on city streets, major roads and public areas while also achieving efficiencies in energy use and reduced maintenance and benefits for the environment.

At the same time, we suggest that a type of LED, e.g. low-pressure sodium or phosphorus-coated, be adopted that will minimize blue-light emissions and thus avoid unnecessary brightening of the night sky.

Currently light pollution emanating from the city can be clearly seen from, for example, Shannon in one direction and Mt Stewart in another.

For this reason, we also hope that existing City lighting can be progressively converted to 'capped' lighting. Such lighting features lamps (termed 'full cut-off luminaires') whose upper surface is shielded so that they do not cast light upwards or horizontally but solely down to the ground where the light is needed. The effect is to reduce not just generalised light pollution but also 'light trespass', where residents have street lighting shining directly into their homes. It would also avoid glare and the creation of shadows, which if anything can make public spaces less safe rather than more. Capped lighting is already used in some municipalities here and overseas to protect the night sky while also affording safe passage to people out and about in the city after dark.

Limitations on illuminated advertising signs, also on flood lighting, sports lighting and the illumination of tall office buildings after a reasonable time in the evening, would be another useful step in the same direction.

## **Palmerston North to Bunnythorpe - Cycle/Pedestrian Pathway**

(1095-Palmerston North to Bunnythorpe - Cycle/Pedestrian Pathway; cf. Cf. 1134-City Entrance Corridors - Streetscape Improvements)

The DAP states that this work is to be deferred, and in view of other similar projects being undertaken by the Council this decision is readily understandable. At the same time, the delay is regrettable when this is a dangerous corridor for cyclists and pedestrians and is extensively used by the now numerous walkers on the Te Araroa Track. The Vegetation Framework proposal shows Council's concern to create attractive and friendly entrances on all approach roads; this corridor is certainly an exception in that respect and receives little attention in the Framework document.

Here is a comment in this quarter's Federated Mountain Clubs Bulletin ('Backcountry', March 2017, p. 25):

*On a beautiful day, late in 2011, [we] drove to Feilding and walked back to PN along Te Araroa's brand new and possibly virginal route. It was awful. The traffic was unforgiving, the walking was mostly on rough grass verge. The litter, pollution, and liberal use of weedkiller made for unpleasant scenery.*

It's not to be forgotten that the route of Te Araroa may be modified if enough walker complaints flow in. Indeed there has been talk in some quarters of taking it along the Tararuas and Ruahines on the eastern side and thereby bypassing PN completely. The sector of the trail that approaches and passes through the City needs to be as attractive as is reasonably possible in order to retain the city's stake in this international attraction.

### **Rubbish and recycling**

ENM notes the proposed move to weekly instead of twice-weekly collections of rubbish and recycling in the CBD, saving \$24,000 p.a., and the reduction of weighbridge hours at the Awapuni Material Recovery Facility from 58 to 50 hours a week, saving \$15,000 p.a.

ENM applauds the Council's efforts to economize but we wonder whether saving money on this front might detract from our image for visitors and our hygiene for residents. Given the abundance of cafes and restaurants in the City, reduced collections may result in accumulation of food waste on city streets and alleyways. There is also the possibility that these cuts will result in increased fly-tipping and other illegal means of disposal. They could prove to be a shortsighted measure when the desideratum is to get as much material as possible recycled and to avoid indiscriminate dumping of waste.

### **Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival 2018**

ENM applauds the Council's ongoing support for the Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival. The Festival is an important and unique initiative that raises not only awareness about the environment in general but also the profile of our local environmental groups. It has great potential to promote our local groups' visions and ideas, attract more volunteers, and make desirable behavioural changes in people's lives. We support its goals, including to engage youth and the broader Palmerston North community using enjoyable and educative activities to connect and potentially become active within local environmental groups.

For the Management Committee, ENM,

Russell Poole

Heike Schiele

Russell Poole would like to speak to this submission during the draft annual plan hearings. He has submitted his contact details and preferred times online.